

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /056 W

----- 083674

R 020535Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4695

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 0986

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SN, VN, ASEAN

SUBJ: SINGAPORE FOREIGN MINISTER'S RESPONSE TO NORTH VIETNAMESE

CALL FOR STEPPED-UP SUBVERSION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

REF: SINGAPORE 0975

1. I ENCOUNTERED GOS FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM AT SOCIAL
FUNCTION MARCH 1, AND ASKED HIM IF FULL TEXT WAS AVAILABLE OF
HIS FEBRUARY 29 SPEECH REPLYING TO NORTH VIETNAM'S CALL FOR
STEPPED-UP SUBVERSION AGAINST NON-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS IN THE
REGION (REFTEL). RAJA REPLIED THAT SPEECH HAD BEEN DELIVERED
"OFF-THE-CUFF", AND THAT THERE WASN'T ANY TEXT. HE APPEARED
RATHER EMBARRASSED, AND I SUSPECT THAT HE AND OTHER MEMBERS
OF TOP GOS LEADERSHIP NOW WISH THAT SINGAPORE'S QUICK AND DEFIANT
RESPONSE TO NORTH VIET-NAM'S CHALLENGE HAD BEEN TAKEN IN COMPANY
WITH OTHER ASEAN MEMBERS. PERHAPS RAJA HAD HOPED THAT REMARKS
DELIVERED IN HIS CONSTITUENCY WOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN LOWER-KEY
PRESS TREATMENT THAN ACTUALLY OCCURRED. CONCEIVABLE THAT
STRAITS TIMES EDITORS MISREAD GOS INTENTIONS IN MATTER AND
GAVE SPEECH MORE PRESS PLAY THAN GOS HAD INTENDED (IF SO, GOS
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WILL BE EVEN MORE DISCOMFITED WHEN IT LEARNS THAT VOA FEATURED

RAJA'S SPEECH IN ITS MARCH 2 MORNING NEWS ROUND-UP).

2. IN COMMENTING ON SPEECH, RAJA SPECIFICALLY CALLED ATTENTION TO THAT PART OF IT WHICH SAID ASEAN WAS NOT AGAINST INDOCHINA AND WANTED TO COEXIST PEACEFULLY WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. THIS ADDS FURTHER WEIGHT TO SUPPOSITION THAT GOS WOULD HAVE PREFERRED A LOWER PROFILE IN PRESS PLAY ON RAJA'S SPEECH.

3. RAJA'S ESTIMATE OF NORTH VIETNAM'S PURPOSE IN CALLING FOR STEPPED-UP SUBVERSION WAS THAT HANOI VIEWED ASEAN SUMMIT AS BEING MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED AND WANTED TO INHIBIT FURTHER ASEAN COOPERATION TO EXTENT POSSIBLE AND TO DISCOURAGE FOREIGN CAPITAL INVESTMENT. HE SPECULATED THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE ALSO HAD THEIR EYES ON THAI GENERAL ELECTIONS. IN THIS RESPECT, HE SAID, HANOI HAD PLAYED INTO THAI HANDS BY MAKING CLEAR ITS HOSTILE INTENTIONS. HOLDRIDGE

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